

**Community Preservation Act Committee
Meeting and Public Forum Minutes
Tuesday, September 30, 2014**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Marilyn Blaustein, Paris Boice, Jim Brissette, Peter Jessop (Chair), Ellen Kosmer, Laura Lovett, Jim Oldham, Mary Streeter (Vice Chair)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: Sandra Anderson

STAFF PRESENT: David Ziomek, Assistant Town Manager

Agenda items to be discussed:

- Final plans/logistics for Forum.
- Approve any minutes.
- If time:
 - Review submittal deadline dates – Dec 10, 2014
 - Review meeting dates below for coming year
 - Review criteria for submitted projects
- Open CPA Plan Public Forum.
 - Welcome from CPAC chair
 - Introduction of Committee
 - Purpose of Forum
 - Agenda Overview
 - CPA Law Overview
 - Presentation of Past Projects
 - Discussion
- Topics the Chair did not reasonably anticipate 48 hours before the meeting.

The meeting was called to order by Peter Jessop at 7:05 pm in the Town Room at Town Hall.

Final plans/logistics for Forum – The time from 6:30 to 7:00 was spent getting the room ready for the public forum, setting up the computer projector, sound system, refreshments, etc.

Minutes – Peter decided to table approval of minutes until our meeting on October 6.

Peter invited the public to help themselves to cider and donuts. Committee members introduced themselves. Peter explained the purpose and process of this CPA Public Forum. He outlined the CPA funding process. He explained the history of the Community Preservation Act in Amherst and the categories in which funds can be spent.

Paris made a photo and informational presentation describing recently completed projects in Amherst that were given CPA funds. She and other committee members answered questions from the audience.

Approximately 35 members of the public attended the Forum. Peter answered a few questions and then explained that some CPA projects involved borrowing. He asked attendees to answer the question, "What would you like to see CPA funds used for?" Jim Brissette took notes on a flip chart (See results below).

Members of the public who spoke include the following.

Bob Romer, a former Historical Commissioner, said he'd like to see historic buildings that are significant to the Town's history preserved. He was pleased to see that the Hope Church received CPA funding.

Nate Buddington, who is on the Board of Amherst Baseball and on LSSE but speaking as a private citizen, advocated for more money to be spent on recreation because the current condition of some fields is dire. Plum Brook Recreation Area is overused and bumpy; fields are not maintained or rested

and are bumpy or sodden. Amherst Baseball, Inc. recently funded improvements on Ziomek baseball field because it was in poor condition and umpires were considering not officiating on that field due to its poor condition. He discussed the many types of learning for kids who participate in team sports. He stressed the intangible values of community building when people come together and get to know each other while in these recreation areas.

Alan Kellman agreed with Mr. Buddington's comments about the value of sports and the skills and life lessons are invaluable. He said the fields in other towns are so much better. He talked about poor quality of fields. Mary Streeter asked if he thought the conditions were due to lack of maintenance. He responded that was part of the problem as was not enough fields available.

Bailey Fosworth, an Amherst baseball player, said current field conditions are poor fields and not just poorly maintained.

Helen Berg would like to see Carriage Shops preserved and does not want to see any more roundabouts. She would like to see the University allow tobacco on campus. She felt the student housing in North Amherst is too dense. She would like Kendrick Park preserved in perpetuity. She displayed a photo of the West Cemetery Mural, which she would like preserved. She said Carriage Shops are open space for downtown and should be preserved as historic. She would like to see cultural diversity preserved in this town.

Ellen Kosmer, CPAC, reminded the public that the CPA Committee does not generate its own projects, but rather recommends proposals brought by other organizations or individuals.

Meg Rosa, co-president of Amherst Youth Soccer Assn.(AYSA), said the fields are overused and need both better irrigation and drainage. She discussed the wetness and inadequacy of some of the fields.

John Boothroyd would like Kendrick Park preserved and old brooks and wetlands restored.

Briony Angus, Chair of the Conservation Commission, discussed how some projects have brought in additional monies through grants. There is a long-range Open Space Plan that thoughtfully examines habitats that need to be preserved.

Maurianne Adams said she has worked with the Amherst Community Land Trust (ACLT) and is committed to affordable housing. She implored the committee to keep affordable housing in mind as it hears about all these competing needs. Her neighborhood has recently been designated as a Local Historic District (LHD). She expects that future proposals from hers and other LHDs will come before CPAC and hopefully be funded. She said some of the initiatives presented need to be coordinated so they can actually become proposals.

Jim Brissette suggested that people interested in recreation needs contact him or LSSE.

John Foster, LSSE committee member, discussed Community field conditions, master plan for fields. LSSE is a feeder for high school teams. John Musante promised a committee would be formed to take a serious look at the fields and recreation opportunities.

Denise Leduc, Amherst Housing Authority Executive Director and member of the Housing and Sheltering Committee, stressed that we need to have families in town. She cited a study that said since 1980 families aged 25 to 44 have been reduced exponentially because they can no longer afford to live here. She urged looking at the whole picture a whole range of what we need to have because if we don't have families with children we won't be able to offer a range of recreation.

Adrienne Terrizzi commented that the Nov. 4 State Election will have a referendum question #5 asking voters whether we should increase the CPA Surcharge from 1½% to 3%. She reminded that the first \$100,000 of a home's values is exempt from the CPA surcharge. She wondered whether there would be any changes to the CPA law that would allow for maintenance in open space and recreation areas. Peter said he was not aware of any upcoming changes to the Act. Mary said a representative from the Community Coalition in Boston (www.communitypreservation.org) said when the CPA Law was tweaked in 2012, that this issue was overlooked and it will be put on a list for possible future consideration. Jim Oldham said there are lots of ways the public can advocate for increasing funding before the State Election.

Jamie Carey said some days he has had to skip practice due to field conditions.

Joanne Campbell, Executive Director of Valley CDC, said she is thankful for past CPA support but there is still a need for affordable housing in Amherst.

Ben Wright, a land conservation specialist who works at Kestrel Land Trust, said there are exciting opportunities for conservation projects and crossover projects for recreation and open space. He said the CPA is important in leveraging additional money from private foundations and the State. The farm bill that recently passed, will actually decrease funding by half for farm preservation to keep farmland affordable. He said there are still a number of important agricultural lands in Town that need protecting. He is glad CPA is still there to help with that.

Peter Ziomek, who is on the Board of the Amherst Baseball Leagues, echoed John Foster's comments about the need for a master plan to restore Community Field. He is pleased with the recent improvements to the War Memorial Pool, but the surrounding recreational areas are dilapidated especially with regard to drainage. He would like to see improvements there.

Alice Swift stressed the need for more affordable housing.

Megan McDonough, Executive Director of Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity (PVHH), said when housing and recreation work together, it works well. She said there is a strong need for families to maintain diversity and inclusion in our community.

Jim Brissette, CPAC, said a dollar spent on recreation saves ten dollars later on through lack of vandalism, police involvement, etc. We have some of the best kids in the country here and we need to do all of that – affordable housing, recreation, and preserve open space and farmland.

Vince O'Connor reminded that all of these activities cost money and we are losing matching State money in the second and third funding rounds because we are not at 3%. He would like to talk with people who are willing to campaign to raise the surcharge to 3%. He would like to speak to habitat reservation – areas on the Holyoke Range, the area in Cushman, other places in North Amherst north of Puffers Pond. He said farmland preservation is important and requires additional money. He cited a statistic that revealed the impact of a loss of 40% of families in town. He said families provide social controls in neighborhoods that prevent rowdiness. He said Clark House and Village Park could have a similar scenario result in less affordable housing for families unless planning is done now to prevent that and the surcharge is increased.

Peter Jessop, CPAC, reiterated the importance of increasing the surcharge.

Patrick Shilling, a lacrosse coach, would like to see drainage issues on fields addressed so fields can be used earlier.

Adrienne asked isn't drainage maintenance? Peter responded that if projects don't fit CPA we can't do anything about that but perhaps LSSE could package a proposal that would improve the situation.

Joanne Sunshower of Shutesbury said she is a facilitator and asked that we forward comments to appropriate departments, committees, and staff,

John Boothroyd said we need affordable housing as well as decent jobs to support families.

Peter suggested we move on to question 2 – how do we feel about CPA funds have been used to date.

Joanne Campbell commended the Town on the affordable housing projects that have been funded.

Vince O'Connor said of the CPA money spent on historic preservation projects most has been on Town property and the Historical Society. Many of the historic features in Town are on private property. He encouraged private individuals to come before the CPA Committee to preserve the historic features of their properties. He believes a town without a past is a town without a future.

Laura Lovett, CPAC, said a survey of historic outbuildings is currently being done. She said preserving the barn on West Street is a move away from some of the traditionally funded projects.

Denise Leduc expressed thanks for the funding for the AHA over the years and told about other funds being brought to Town because of CPA funds. With this leveraging you get the biggest bang for your buck. This is extremely important for housing.

Peter Jessop, CPAC, reminded that the thanks are due to the taxpayers of Amherst.

Jim Oldham, CPAC, requested members of the public who represent various organizations involved in organized recreation address the question of access to the fields. He said when the soccer fields were built Town Meeting was told the field would be for everyone but that does not seem to be happening. He said we should preserve and protect resources for the whole community.

Meg Rosa, Co-President of Amherst Youth Soccer Association (AYSA), said they have a new Board as of last year and they were not aware that recreational soccer was supposed to be able to use Plum Brook field as well. She added that more groups are now using the field.

Linda Chalfant, Director of Amherst Leisure Services & Supplemental Education (LSSE), said at practice time anyone can use the field when it is unscheduled. She said a previous AYSA Board decided that younger players would use smaller fields. She added that adults play on the field as well as Ultimate Frisbee players. There was no decision made to limit the field to travel teams.

Nate Buddington said kids who get bumped off of Plum Brook should not have to play on lesser fields. He stressed that there are failing infrastructures that need to be addressed.

Adrienne Terrizzi said she came to discuss passive recreation. She has a project – restoring Markert's Pond in Orchard Valley. She would love to see CPA funding that allows this pond to become a centerpiece of the neighborhood. She would like more passive recreation.

Peter Jessop suggested that projects be brought to feeder committees (Housing & Sheltering, Conservation Commission, Historical Commission, and LSSE) to gather support. He said projects could also be brought directly to the CPA Committee. He said feeder committees would be asked for a response to proposals submitted.

Peter asked that comments now be made that address these two questions:

- What would you like to see accomplished with CPA funds for Affordable Housing, Historic Preservation, Open Space, and Recreation?
- What are your highest priorities for CPA funds in the next two years?

He encouraged people who haven't yet spoken to offer comments.

Clayton Foster, a high school freshman, said he plays at both Plum Brook and Fort River fields during the last seven years. Fort River is poor. We need more fields & spaces.

Naomi Elliott would like to see more indoor facilities funded for recreation.

Vince O'Connor said we need a clear policy articulated about preserving farmland and open space. He would like more money for subsidies to help pay for fees to play. He said Amherst's fees are the most costly in the area. He commented that we are not going to build a hockey rink, so we need to ask for unrestricted access to facilities at the colleges and University and the Middle School Pool.

John Boothroyd said in the past the small neighborhoods had some kind of hockey rink or pond. It was these ponds that created state champs.

Helen Berg asked for clarification on the December 10, 2014 deadline for proposals.

Peter explained the process for applying for funds. The Request for Proposals for FY2016 funding Letter will be posted online in October and be sent to a list of organizations.

Alan Powell said he is more concerned about process than funding. He said there are a number of projects that have been recommended and passed Town Meeting that are still in stasis. He asked the Committee to provide an accounting of what has been funded and what is on hold.

Peter thanked everyone for attending and reminded people to fill out an index card.

Comments recorded on index cards

- Community Field – Reconstruct fields for irrigation, drainage and safety. Spectators sit on steep hills and have to traverse uneven and hilly terrain to reach bleachers.
- A long-range suggestion for Open Space & Passive recreation. Purchase a use restriction to gain for the North East portion of the town& everyone in town. The "Cushman Forest" excellent for passive recreation – hiking, biking, horseback riding on existing trails – Trees for benefit of air quality & global warming. Wildlife is abundant there & needs protecting. Also it is now used for hunting – and that could be continued if not too contradictory.
- Ben Wright, Kestrel Land Trust. Question #4 Priority - #1 OPEN SPACE – forest, farmland, areas that complement other CPA categories
- Alan Kellman Recreation!, Affordable Housing!

Comments recorded on chart paper:

What would you like to see CPA funds used for?

- Historic Amherst structures
- More on recreation
- Not enough fields and facilities
- Carriage Shops mural
- Kendrick Park
- Field irrigation / drainage
- Kendrick Park

- Skating ponds
- Wetland / brook restoration
- Open Space Preservation Plan
- Affordable Housing
- Historic Districts
- Community Field
- Affordable housing for families and seniors
- ? CPA funds for maintenance?
- Affordable housing, including singles, families, seniors
- Crossover projects – housing and open space or recreation and open space
- Leverage CPA finds
- Farmland preservation
- Community Field
- Master Plan
- Affordable housing – leverage funds w/ CPA finds
- Habitat preservation – Holyoke Range, Cushman area
- Farmland – East Amherst / Maplewood
- Affordable housing – family housing, Clark House, Village Park
- Recreation – drainage
- Family affordable housing

How do you feel about how CPA funding has been used to date?

- Housing
- improve Preservation outreach → private owners of historic structures
- leveraging of CPA funds for housing
- access to recreation areas
- importance of access for the entire community
- lack of rec fields
- handicap access
- Orchard Valley Pond area – passive recreation

What are your highest priorities for CPA funds in the next two years?

- Fields / spaces
- Indoor rec facilities for broader year round use
- Clear policy on land preservation – priorities w/ Select Board
- Money saved via CPA reflected in Town budget re: subsidies for FRL
- (use of “other” facilities)
- coordination w/ other orgs, colleges, university
- ? Process – update on previously approved projects & their status

A motion to adjourn was made at 8:58 pm, voted unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by Mary Streeter

Approved 10/7/14

DOCUMENTS DISTRIBUTED

CPAC Agenda 2014-9-30, 1 page

Agenda CPA Plan Public Forum, 1 page

Chart of Allowable Uses of CPA Funds – Mass. Dept. of Revenue, 2012, 1 page

Paris Boice's CPA Plan Forum Notes and Agenda, 3 pages

CPAC Meeting Draft Minutes 9 16-2014, 2 pages

Emails received at cpa@amherstma.gov, 7 pages